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Former US official predicts defense cuts

Former CIA director Stansfield Turner predicted yesterday that President Ronald Reagan's defense budget would be cut by Congress because "national security is not only armaments. The economic health of our country is a very important element of our national security."

While admiring the President's "resoluteness" in not wanting to cut his defense budget, Turner told a group of money managers and professional investors: "I would rather see some reduction in the defense budget if that is the only way the President and Congress can bring the budget deficit down . . . to well below \$100 million."

Turner, who was made head of the CIA in March 1977 by President Jimmy

Carter, also said there would be more emphasis on smaller, conventional weapons as a result of recent military engagements, and suggested areas for cutting the defense budget.

"... I think if we look at the overall interests of national security, some cuts in the defense program may be necessary." In areas like large supercarriers and MX missiles, "there is room for such cuts," Turner told a luncheon audience of the Financial Analysts Federation.

The Iranian hostage crisis and the crisis in the Falkland Islands have shown political leaders that their political future can come to depend on their nation's ability to project its power over great distances, he said.

The concern with the country's ability to do this effectively, Turner said, will lead to placing less importance on strategic nuclear forces and more importance on conventional forces and building military forces that can be transported long distances.

For the US defense industry, Turner said, this would mean more airlift aircraft and making military equipment lighter and smaller.

"We need more aircraft carriers," he said, "But I don't think we need them in the large supercarrier versions." He said that the bombing of the British destroyer Sheffield by an Argentine missile showed that "you can't afford, in war anymore, to put too many of your eggs in one basket."

—JOAN FITZGERALD